

**Special educational  
needs and/or disabilities  
Training toolkit**

For PGCE trainees

Working in partnership

# Working with colleagues in school

Self-study task 16

# Introduction to the self-study tasks

These self-study tasks are designed to help trainee teachers on PGCE courses learn more about teaching pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. They can be used as stand-alone activities or to supplement and extend taught sessions on SEN and disability provided by the school or local authority.

There are 17 self-study tasks in all. Each task will take about two hours to complete, excluding practical activities.

Every Child Matters	
SST1	Inclusion and Every Child Matters
SST2	SEN and disability legislation
SST3	English as an additional language and SEN
SST4	Children's needs and development
SST5	ICT and SEN
Cognition and learning	
SST6	Moderate learning difficulties
SST7	Dyslexia and specific learning difficulties
SST8	Working memory
Behavioural, emotional and social needs	
SST9	Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
Communication and interaction	
SST10	Speech, language and communication needs
SST11	Autistic spectrum disorders
Physical and sensory impairment	
SST12	Visual impairment
SST13	Hearing impairment
SST14	Handwriting
SST15	Developmental coordination disorder/dyspraxia
Working in partnership	
SST16	Working with colleagues in school
SST17	Working with parents/carers and other professionals

## How to use the materials

This is an online resource. Some of the tasks are for you to do on your own; others are particularly suitable to do working with a partner.

Where some of the tasks ask you to record information you need to print out the relevant material first. Other tasks may involve using the internet, which gives you access to rich sources of information about SEN and disability and online forums for additional advice.

Each task includes the following elements:

- the professional standards addressed
- learning outcomes
- an opportunity to explore the concepts, definitions and research findings most relevant to the topic
- ideas for implementing the national curriculum inclusion statement in relation to the topic, including target setting, practical strategies, the role of additional adults and pupil grouping
- practical activities – including action research, child study and class observation
- resources – including books and websites
- an opportunity to evaluate your progress against the outcomes and plan your next steps.

A useful resource to support your studies is **Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in Schools and Early Years Settings (DfES, 2006)**. It is available free to all schools and there should be a copy in your training institution or school. (If you haven't got a copy, you can order one using the link.)

It should be read in conjunction with **Promoting Disability Equality in Schools (DfES, 2006)** – which you can view, download or order by following the link.

## Evidence and sources of information

As you work through these self-study tasks, try to keep a critical and evaluative attitude. Much of the understanding we have of what works, or doesn't work, in relation to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities has not been fully researched.

Remember:

- many interventions suggested for one group of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities will often benefit other groups of pupils, including those without SEN and/or disabilities
- the quickest way to find out what to do is often to ask the pupil or their parent/carers what they think works.

Literature reviews of 'what works' in relation to literacy and mathematics for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, which has been investigated in some depth, are available at: [www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR554.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR554.pdf)

Other sources of information are listed at the end, under 'Resources and references'. You can use these to follow up and learn in greater depth about the material covered in this self-study task.

## Self-study task 16

# Working with colleagues in school

### Professional standards addressed

- Q4** Communicate effectively with children, young people, colleagues, parents and carers.
- Q5** Recognise and respect the contribution that colleagues, parents and carers can make to the development and well-being of children and young people, and to raising their levels of attainment.
- Q6** Have a commitment to collaboration and cooperative working.
- Q21** (b) Know how to identify and support children and young people whose progress, development or well-being is affected by changes or difficulties in their personal circumstances, and when to refer them to colleagues for specialist support.
- Q32** Work as a team member and identify opportunities for working with colleagues, sharing the development of effective practice with them.

### Learning outcomes

You will:

- understand the importance of collaborating and communicating with colleagues who have responsibility for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- understand how good collaboration and communication can improve the learning of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- know the range of roles that additional adults carry out, and the issues around managing them
- understand the importance of promoting pupils' independence, and
- be aware of the research evidence for the impact of additional support.



### Activities

		Timings
Activity 1	The school's responsibilities	10 minutes
Activity 2	The SENCO's roles and responsibilities	45 minutes
Activity 3	Roles and responsibilities of other colleagues in school	20 minutes
Activity 4	Roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants	30 minutes
Activity 5	Points for action	15 minutes

### Resources and references

Appendix	Suggested answers and solutions
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## Activity 1

# The school's responsibilities



Approximate timing: 10 minutes

Three key elements in the framework of school practice for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities are relevant to the way you work with colleagues in school to support pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

## 1 Every Child Matters (ECM)

All staff in the school should work together to implement the ECM outcomes:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution, and
- achieve economic well-being.

## 2 The SEN Code of Practice

The SEN Code of Practice is clear about a school's responsibilities in relation to pupils with SEN:

"Provision for the pupils is a matter for the school as a whole."

Chapter 1, para 1:32

The headteacher is responsible for managing all aspects of the school's work, including provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. All teaching staff and other adults working in the school must be fully aware of the school's procedures for identifying, assessing and making provision for pupils with SEN.

## 3 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Part 4

There are about 8.5 million disabled people in the UK, and 770,000 of these are children and young people under 16 years of age.<sup>1</sup>

In 2001, an additional section, Part 4, was added to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This meant that the Act now covered education, in schools, further education (FE) colleges, universities and elsewhere.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) published its Code of Practice for Schools in 2002. This explains schools' duties on disability discrimination and gives guidance on how they should be implemented.

As well as being aware of your own responsibilities under the SEN Code of Practice, the DRC's Code and in respect of ECM, you need also to be aware of the roles of other school staff in supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, and their role in supporting you.

<sup>1</sup> Information from Contact a Family – see their website at [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)



## Activity 2

# The SENCO's roles and responsibilities



Approximate timing: 45 minutes

Many colleagues can help you develop your expertise for working with pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, but the most important source of advice and support in school will be the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO). In some schools, this role is part of the work of the inclusion coordinator or manager.

The SEN Code of Practice explains that the SENCO:

- works closely with the headteacher and governing body on strategic development of the school's SEN policy and provision
- is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy
- coordinates provision for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, working closely with staff, parents and other agencies, and
- provides related professional guidance to colleagues.

"The [primary] SENCO should collaborate with curriculum coordinators so that learning for all children is given equal priority, and that available resources are used to maximum effect."

SEN Code of Practice, para 5:31

"The [secondary] SENCO should collaborate with Heads of Department or Faculty, the literacy and numeracy coordinators and pastoral colleagues to ensure that learning for all pupils is given equal priority and that available resources are used to maximum effect."

SEN Code of Practice, para 6:34

If necessary, the SENCO can direct you to:

- other professionals who can offer more specialist advice and support, and
- other local and national sources of information.

Many SENCOs are members of the National Association for SEN (NASEN),<sup>2</sup> which has information on research, publications, events and courses.

### Find out more about SENCOs' roles and responsibilities

Every maintained school must appoint a teacher to coordinate provision for pupils with SEN.<sup>3</sup>

The school's governing body decides what role the SENCO has in relation to the leadership and management of the school, and what the SENCO's key responsibilities will be. The governing body must also monitor the SENCO's effectiveness in carrying out their responsibilities.

Regulations suggest what the SENCO's responsibilities might be. They reflect, to a large extent, the description of the role in the SEN Code of Practice (the Code of Practice gives guidance on the role of the SENCO in mainstream primary and secondary schools).

In general, the role of the SENCO is to lead teaching and learning and coordination of provision for pupils with SEN in their school, so that the pupils can learn and develop. The person appointed as the SENCO is not expected to carry out all of the functions of the role themselves, and SENCOs are often supported by others. It is up to individual schools to decide how to organise the coordination of SEN provision, and arrangements vary from school to school. But all schools must have regard to the guidance in the SEN Code of Practice and comply with statutory regulations.

<sup>2</sup> See the website [www.nasen.org.uk](http://www.nasen.org.uk) for more information.

<sup>3</sup> This begins on 1 September 2009 – for more information, see The Education (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) Regulations 2008.



Ask the SENCO(s) in your placement school(s) to tell you about their role, the functions associated with it and how those functions are carried out. Use table 1 as a template to make notes:

**Table 1: A SENCO's work**

**Aspects of a SENCO's work**

Writing individual targets for pupils

Coordinating support from outside school

Working as part of a central management team overseeing work on difference and diversity

Building staff commitment to an inclusive approach

Coordinating and supporting the work of staff working with pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

Teaching as a model for others

Assessing the progress of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

Differentiating or supporting the differentiation of schemes of work

Organising staff training on SEN/disability and supporting trainees and newly qualified teachers

Following your discussion, note down:

- the aspects of the role that you feel are the most important in helping to improve the achievement and well-being of pupils in your placement school(s)
- how the different roles are carried out in practice, and
- why they are so important.

If it is not possible to interview the SENCO(s) in your placement school(s), search for programmes about the role of the SENCO on Teachers TV ([www.teachers.tv](http://www.teachers.tv)) and use table 1 to highlight the practice you see in them.

Note down:

- the aspects of the role that you feel are the most important in helping to improve the achievement and well-being of pupils
- how the different roles are carried out in practice, and
- why they are so important.

The SENCO role is always busy, and involves a number of different facets. Consider in particular the ways that SENCOs work with and through other staff, and the impact this has on teaching and learning.



## Activity 3

# Roles and responsibilities of other colleagues in school



Approximate timing: 20 minutes

### Other teachers

Teachers who have previously taught pupils with SEN and/or disabilities in your class will know a lot about them. They are likely to be able to help you with suggestions on differentiating lessons for them, including ways to group pupils or specific resources they found useful.

### Learning mentors or behaviour mentors

Most secondary schools and some primary schools now have learning mentors or behaviour mentors to help pupils focus on their learning and manage their behaviour. They may be able to offer you useful advice, from their training, about positive behaviour management strategies which you can put into practice.

### Subject specialist teachers

Subject/curriculum leaders have a responsibility to advise their colleagues on the subject aspects of meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities. In particular, they should be able to offer direct advice on teaching pupils with the more common types of SEN and/or disabilities.

For example, they should have:

- ideas on adapting schemes of work to share with you
- subject resources which have proved particularly helpful for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, and
- access to associations that can help with strategies that are particularly relevant to the subject (all subject associations' websites can be found through the Council for Subject Associations' website: [www.subjectassociation.org.uk](http://www.subjectassociation.org.uk)).

### Transition coordinators

Schools often have someone who coordinates pupils' transfer from one phase of schooling to another (nursery to infant, infant to junior, junior to secondary, secondary to further education).

The changes when they transfer to a new school can be hard for most pupils, but often very difficult for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.



Find out more about the transition coordinator's role at your placement school. It will probably involve giving information to the receiving school, working with pupils and discussing what will happen, and working with parents/carers to plan a smooth transfer. If the pupils in a class you teach are approaching a transfer to a new school, you will need to liaise with the transition coordinator to make sure the process is as smooth as possible for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities.

## School meals supervisors

School meals supervisors see pupils in informal situations, and can often tell you about peer relationships and what any flashpoints might be.



Get to know some of the supervisors and talk to them about pupils in your class who may need an eye kept on them in unstructured times. Make sure you get to know if a particular pupil has behaved well or been particularly helpful to another pupil. Find out what reward system is used at lunchtimes.



## Activity 4

# Roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants



Approximate timing: 30 minutes

With your own classes, you have overall responsibility for the pupils and for the deployment and management of any additional adults who work with you. A significant part of this, in relation to supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, is likely to be the development of your work with teaching assistants. Teaching assistants should not be expected to plan differentiated activities for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities on their own – teachers are responsible for this.

### Briefly explore the literature

Read the following information about research on support from additional adults in class.

#### Supporting pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

Ofsted (2004) found that, "Support by teaching assistants can be vital, but the organisation of it can mean that pupils have insufficient opportunity to develop their skill, understanding and independence."

Some key issues about the way teaching assistants are used to support pupils with SEN and/or disabilities have been identified by research over recent years.

#### Effects on pupils' progress

Smith et al's literature review (2004) found that teachers identified teaching assistants as having many positive effects on pupils' performance. Longitudinal research (mostly in primary schools) in the UK and the United States (Blatchford et al, 2004; Gerber et al, 2001) suggests, however, that the evidence for these positive effects on pupils' academic progress is limited. Typically, the research found that teachers valued the work of teaching assistants, and teaching assistants enjoyed their roles, predominantly working with groups of low-attaining pupils or supporting pupils with behaviour difficulties.

Ofsted (2006) reported – after a survey of 74 schools in 17 local authorities – that teaching assistants provided valuable support and many were taking on difficult roles. However, they recognised that support from teaching assistants was not a substitute for focused, highly skilled teaching, and that pupils in mainstream schools, where teaching assistant support was the main type of SEN support, were less likely to make good academic progress than those who had access to specialist teaching.

#### Time 'on task' and its impact on learning

Howes (2003) found that teaching assistants' support in class increased the amount of time pupils spend on task, but that this did not necessarily result in an increased rate of learning.

Ofsted's 2008 study of how well new teachers are prepared for teaching pupils with SEN and/or disabilities suggested that new teachers planned the work of teaching assistants and other adults more effectively than they monitored its impact on pupils' learning.

#### Dependence

Research also shows that the presence of a teaching assistant can sometimes be seen as being overprotective and increasing pupils' dependence on adults. Gerschel (2005) refers to the 'velcro model' – where a teaching assistant is always attached to a single pupil – and cautions against a culture in which the pupil may become emotionally dependent on the teaching assistant, and less likely to be fully included in the class or to form relationships with other pupils.

At secondary level, teaching assistants have been seen as “co-learners; modelling how to learn; and less the authority figure than the teacher. However, some students could see interventions by teaching assistants as intrusive and unhelpful.” (Calker et al, 2007)

Teaching assistants’ support appears to promote inclusion more effectively when it is directed towards a group of pupils rather than an individual (Lacey, 2001).

### The teacher’s role

The presence of a teaching assistant may have an impact on how the teacher sees their own role with pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Mencap (1999), for example, studied schools reputed to have good practice in SEN and inclusion, and found that, all too often, the teaching assistant was the pupil’s main teacher, doing all the planning, with few opportunities to liaise with the class teacher.

Ofsted (2002) found that the presence of teaching assistants can improve the quality of teaching, particularly “where the teaching assistant is following a prescribed intervention or catch-up programme, for which they had received training and worked in close partnership with the teacher”. However, research for the Department for Children, Schools and Families on the deployment and impact of support staff (Blatchford et al, 2007) found that 75 per cent of the teachers surveyed had received no training to help them work with support staff in classrooms, and most said they did not have allocated planning or feedback time with support staff. A further report from the research, in 2009, highlighted the negative effect of substituting support staff for teachers on pupils’ attainment and progress.



Now use what you have read to complete table 2.

When you have finished, **click here** to compare your answers with those suggested in the appendix.

**Table 2: Notes about the research**

Research on additional support in class	The research suggests that
Why is careful deployment of teaching assistants in class important?	
What helps?	

You may find the checklist in table 3 useful to audit and improve your practice when you are teaching classes that include support from a teaching assistant.

**Table 3: Checklist when working with teaching assistants**

Question	Yes	Needs attention
Are teaching assistants clear about the classroom implications of school policies on working with pupils with SEN and/or disabilities?		
Are teaching assistants clear about the objectives of their support for a pupil with SEN and/or disabilities?		
Are teaching assistants aware of the school's behaviour policies?		
Are teaching assistants effectively involved in positive support for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)?		
Are teaching assistants clear about confidentiality and about the importance of passing on information from pupils or parents on SEN and/or disabilities?		
Are teaching assistants clear about pupils' medium-term targets for learning?		
Are teaching assistants involved in planning and feedback on lessons?		
Do teaching assistants prepare differentiated resources, eg text supported by symbols, tactile resources, tapes of information text?		
Do teaching assistants use time to pre-tutor a pupil or group before whole-class teaching?		
Do teaching assistants help pupils assess whether or not they have met learning outcomes?		
Do you make sure that teaching assistants encourage pupils to be independent?		
Do teaching assistants offer support tactfully so that pupils are not embarrassed in front of others?		
Do you use teaching assistants to observe particular pupils?		
Do you check teaching assistants' records?		
Do you recognise successful work by teaching assistants – by praise or other methods?		

## Effective support

Remember, effective support from teaching assistants:

- is built on mutual understanding of their roles and responsibilities
- is based on an understanding of individual pupils' needs
- aims to build pupils' independence, not encourage dependence
- is targeted at building pupils' self-confidence by enabling them to succeed and providing feedback/praise
- aims to increase pupils' inclusion in the peer group
- aids the teacher by providing observation and feedback on particular pupils' progress, and
- is delivered by teaching assistants who:
  - have good subject knowledge and knowledge of SEN/disabilities
  - know the overall objectives for the lesson and the sequence of lessons
  - know what the pupil(s) they are supporting should be learning, and
  - know their own role in helping pupils to achieve their planned learning outcomes.

## Activity 5

### Points for action



Approximate timing: 15 minutes

Spend a few minutes reflecting on this self-study task and record key points for action below.

What do I want to do next to develop my practice?

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How will I do this?

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What is my timescale for this to happen?

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How will I know if I have been successful?

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Do I need to involve anyone else in enabling this to happen?

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# Resources and references

## Useful resources

Fox, G, 2003, A Handbook for Learning Support Assistants: Teachers and assistants working together, David Fulton Publishers

Spooner, W, 2006, The SEN Handbook for Trainee Teachers, NQTs and Teaching Assistants, nasen/ David Fulton Publishers

Teachers TV ([www.teachers.tv](http://www.teachers.tv)) – for examples of practice in relation to teaching pupils with special educational needs

## References

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Blatchford, P, Bassett, P, Brown, P, Koutsoubou, M, Martin, C, Russell, A and Rubie-Davies, C (2009), The deployment and impact of support staff in schools: Results from strand 2, wave 2 (DCSF Research Report 148), London, Department for Children, Schools and Families

Calder, W, Tiknaz, Y, Sage, R, Taylor, C, Tucker, S A, Tansey, R and Cooper, P W, 2007, A Systematic Literature Review on the Perceptions of Ways in which Teaching Assistants Work to Support Pupils' Social and Academic Engagement in Secondary Classrooms (1988–2005), in Research Evidence in Education Library, London EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

DfES, 2001, Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, DCSF/581/2001 – especially chapter 1: Principles and Policies – available online at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724)

Disability Rights Commission, 2002, Code of Practice for Schools – Disability Discrimination Act 1995: Part 4 – available online at:

[http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/drc/the\\_law/legislation\\_\\_codes\\_\\_regulation/codes\\_of\\_practice.html](http://83.137.212.42/sitearchive/drc/the_law/legislation__codes__regulation/codes_of_practice.html)

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Gerschel, L, The Special Educational Needs Coordinator's Role in Managing Teaching Assistants: The Greenwich Perspective, Support for Learning, 20, 2005, pages 69–76

Howes, A, Teaching Reforms and the Impact of Paid Adult Support on Participation and Learning in Mainstream Schools, Support for Learning, 18(4), 2003, pages 147–153

Lacey, P, The Role of Learning Support Assistants in the Inclusive Learning of Pupils with Severe and Profound Learning Difficulties, Educational Review, 53, 2001

Mencap, 1999, On a Wing and a Prayer, Mencap, London

Ofsted, 2002, Teaching Assistants in Primary Schools: An evaluation of the quality and impact of their work

Ofsted, 2004, Special Educational Needs and Disability: Towards inclusive schools, ref HMI2276 – available online at: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications)

Ofsted, 2006, Inclusion: Does it Matter Where Pupils are Taught?

Ofsted, 2008, How Well New Teachers are Prepared to Teach Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Smith, P, Whitby, K and Sharp, C, 2004, The Employment and Deployment of Teaching Assistants, LGA research report 5/04, NFER, Slough



## Appendix

### Suggested answers and solutions

**Table 2: Notes about the research – possible answers**

Research on additional support in class	The research suggests that
Why is careful deployment of teaching assistants in class important?	Without careful deployment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• teaching assistants do not necessarily influence pupils' progress</li><li>• their presence can result in dependence on adults, and</li><li>• a teaching assistant can become the main teacher of a pupil with SEN and/or disabilities</li></ul>
What helps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Effective management</li><li>• Teaching assistants working with groups to support inclusion</li><li>• Teaching assistants working on prescribed programmes</li></ul>

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